

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. March 14, 1965: John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, today announced that an exhibition, "Eyewitness to Space", will open at the National Gallery of Art on Sunday, March 14, and will continue through Sunday, April 18.

The 70 paintings and drawings are the work of 15 contemporary American artists and were produced under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Art Program. Over the past two years the artists have been invited to record their impressions of the space exploration program, conducted by NASA. The work will be on view in the Central Gallery on the ground floor. A checklist of the exhibiting artists is attached.

"The artist" Mr. Walker said, "has always provided a unique and valuable insight into history in the making. The awesome events of today are a worthy challenge to his abilities, and we hope these pictures will give future generations some idea of the excitement and wonder we feel as man crosses the threshold of space."

Among the subjects represented in the exhibition are views of the Mercury-Atlas and Saturn rocket launch complexes at Cape Kennedy, scenes of the Pacific recovery of Astronaut Cooper after his orbital flight, rocket launchings, test facilities at the Marshall Spaceflight Center, Huntsville, Alabama, and many on-the-spot drawings of the astronauts and space technicians.

The program started in March, 1962, when NASA Administrator, Mr. James E. Webb, with the advice of Mr. David E. Finley, former Director of the National Gallery of Art, decided to ask some of the

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country's top artists to record the epoch-making events at Cape Canaveral, now Cape Kennedy.

There are many precedents in American history for the decision. Explorers during the 17th Century, Civil War magazine editors, and official historians during both World Wars, have called on the artist for help. Unlike previous sponsors, NASA has the significant advantage of being able to pinpoint almost exactly the time and place where history will be made, and offer the artist a ring-side seat. He is asked not only to record the strange new world which space technology is creating, but to interpret, and probe for the inner meaning and emotional impact of events of fateful significance to mankind. The primary purpose is to document history, and at the same time produce reliable graphic reproductions for use in transmitting facts about the space program to the general public. In all, 20 artists have been involved.

The NASA Art Program has been under the guidance of Dr. H. Lester Cooke, Curator of Painting at the National Gallery of Art.

"Our first American astronaut's orbital flight was the focal point of the hopes and prayers of all America," Dr. Cooke said. "History is being made so swiftly at Cape Kennedy there has not always been the time and means to record in every way events of vital importance. Painting is the most lasting of all visual records. It is hoped that the past held captive by these pictures will prove to future generations that America has produced not only scientists capable of shaping the destiny of our age, but artists worthy to keep them company."

End

4" x 5" color transparencies and black-and-white glossy photographs available on loan for publication from Mrs. Marjorie Czyzak, 737-4215, ext. 247.

EXHIBITING ARTISTS IN "EYEWITNESS TO SPACE"

Lamar Dodd

Dong Kingman

Paul Sample

Hugh Laidman

Theodore Hancock

George Weymouth

Mitchell Jamieson

John McCoy II

Robert McCall

Alfred McAdams

Peter Hurd

Robert Shore

Paul Calle

Norman Rockwell

Fred Freeman